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ABSTRACT

These four newsletter issues provide information on current research and practice to early childhood professionals teaching in the primary grades in Colorado, focusing on readiness of schools for children entering the public school system. The Winter issue focuses on standards of quality for primary programs, and includes discussion of developmentally appropriate art instruction, readying schools for students, constructing curriculum, and a child's readiness for school. The Spring issue focuses on the Texas Education Agency's report "First Impressions," ("Primeras Impresiones") a vision of Texas education in response to issues of diversity, retention, inappropriate curriculum and assessment, and the changing nature of education. This issue also discusses Colorado quality standards, and transition-to-school activities planning in Oregon. The Summer issue focuses on "transitions," providing a historical perspective on what were formerly called "articulation" and "continuity." Also discussed is responding to misinformation about developmentally appropriate practice. The Fall issue focuses on Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and how the concept can be used to shape instruction in the classroom. (HTH)

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Of Primary Interest

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Standards of Quality for Primary Programs

The Michigan State Board of Education has issued a document entitled ***Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten Through Second Grade.*** Its purpose is to provide assistance to administrators, teachers, and parents as they develop quality early childhood care and education programs for children ages four through eight years old. The concepts presented are based on research in the area of the individual needs of young children of preschool and primary age, children's developmental stages, and the environments in which children learn best.

Critical components of the developmentally appropriate practices which Michigan advocates include: philosophy, accountability, coordination/cooperation and program support, family and community collaboration, child development, curriculum, and assessment and evaluation. Each component is presented as a distinct area for which standards have been established, and is used to define quality and to delineate expected program outcomes. ***The Early Childhood Standards*** incorporate the licensing regulations for the care and protection of children attending Michigan's child care centers, public school sponsored preschools, and before- and after-school (school age) programs.

The document defines quality early childhood care and education programs as those which recognize each child as a whole person, whose growth occurs in developmental stages that are sequential and continuous. Such programs "recognize and value families in their cultural, linguistic, and social diversity as active partners within the school community." According to the standards, any list of the benchmarks of quality should incorporate the following:

- *a qualified and nurturing staff,*
- *a warm, stimulating, and multi-sensory environment,*
- *developmentally appropriate materials,*
- *a curriculum that supports children's individual rates of development,*
- *teaching practices that reflect developmentally appropriate practices,*
- *a continuous evaluation system that regularly assesses and reviews program goals and learner outcomes,*
- *a cooperative venture between home and school,*
- *collaboration with the community, and*
- *continuous staff development.*

The curriculum component consists of five standards, each of which is elaborated by a list of criteria, which are further described by specific quality indicators. Standard F.5, for example, reads that "Curricular goals (scheduling, transitions, and grouping practices) are reflected in the management and organization of the day." Criterion F.5.3 elaborates the concept by stating that "Grouping practices are used to strengthen children's learning." Six quality indicators provide details of these grouping practices, the fifth one specifically addressing class size and student/teacher ratios: "Minimum classroom ratios are to be maintained as follows: preschool children 8:1 (one teacher, one paraprofessional); all kindergarten children 20:2 (one teacher, one paraprofessional); first grade children 20:2 (one teacher, one paraprofessional); second grade children 25:2 (one teacher, one paraprofessional)."

Curriculum content areas are organized in the cognitive, creative, language, physical, and social-emotional domains. Concrete indicators and illustrative classroom strategies accompany each learner outcome.

Copies of Michigan's ***Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten Through Second Grade*** may be obtained by contacting Michael C. McGraw, Education Consultant, Michigan Department of Education, Early Childhood Education/Parenting/Comprehensive School Health Unit, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, Michigan 48909.

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Developmentally Appropriate Art Instruction

A National Art Education Association briefing paper entitled ***Developmentally Appropriate Practices for the Visual Arts Education of Young Children*** highlights practices that are both developmentally appropriate and inappropriate for children from preschool through the primary grades. According to authors Cynthia Colbert of the University of South Carolina and Martha Taunton of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, quality art education is instructionally appropriate as well as developmentally appropriate:

> *"Developmentally appropriate practices in the visual arts recognize children's changing capacities to create, perceive, and appreciate the visual arts, while accommodating a variety of individual characteristics such as emotional, intellectual, physical, perceptual, social, aesthetic, and creative development. Instructionally appropriate art education incorporates the best known practices derived from research and from practical experiences (with children) to offer programs that maximize opportunities for learning and success for all children."*

The authors state that quality art instruction consists of the following three important themes:

1. Children need many opportunities to create art.
2. Children need many opportunities to look at and talk about art.
3. Children need to become aware of art in their everyday lives.

These themes are addressed throughout six components of a quality program—curriculum, choice of art materials, correlation of arts concepts with other areas of curriculum, creation of art, display of artwork, and responses to works of art.

The report provides examples of appropriate and inappropriate art education practices. The goals and objectives of the curriculum should be based on the interests and needs of the children, not on the teacher's preferences. The curriculum should consist of a balance of art, perceptual activities, and responsive activities. It should not focus on the making of crafts, which necessitates children following step-by-step instructions, or be centered around pictures and objects based on holidays and seasons.

Materials, which may be used in experimental ways, should be available to children for self-initiated art activities. Children should be allowed to work individually or in groups, as they create relying on their imaginations, experiences, and subjects of importance to them. They should not be hurried, but allowed to return to their work, as the need arises, or even to complete it the following day. The teacher should neither control the distribution of materials nor take all of the responsibility for clean up.

Art should not be taught as a separate area of the curriculum. It should be integrated throughout other areas, since the goals and objectives of a quality art program are, in fact, the goals of a quality early childhood program. Art experiences should, for example, facilitate the development of language, increase visual and tactile perceptions, provide experiences with shapes, colors, and patterns, and re-enforce classification efforts.

Children should be allowed to select items of their artwork to be displayed; teachers should display the art of all children, not merely the works which they personally like. Work should be displayed at children's eye level and should be used to facilitate discussion. As part of the display, the thoughts of the teachers and children should be posted along with the goals and objectives of the lesson.

Art works should reflect the individuality of each of the young artists and thus differ from child to child; products therefore should be unique, individual, not similar to each other. Rather than teachers' lecturing about reproductions of works of art, they should encourage children to describe what they see and discuss how they feel.

Copies of the briefing paper may be purchased from the National Art Education Association, Publication Sales, 1916 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091-1590.

Readying Schools for Students

The Southern Regional Education Board has issued a report focusing on the national education goal of insuring that all children will enter school ready to learn. Entitled ***Getting Schools Ready for Children: The Other Side of the Readiness Goal,*** the report indicates the progress that preschool programs are making in applying current knowledge to their programs about how children learn. Many elementary schools, however, are using "outmoded" teaching methods which are "inappropriate for the developmental levels of virtually all children in the five- to eight-year-old group." The readiness goal will not be attained, the report warns, unless practices in the primary grades change, because "the benefits of high-quality preschool programs and other measures to improve children's readiness can be lost very quickly when students enter schools that are not ready for them."

The report recommends that primary programs be based on hands-on learning and recognize and respect individual developmental differences of children. One of the obstacles professionals face is that parents and the public continue to exert pressure on teachers to "do inappropriate things" with their students. Although federal Chapter 1 funds can be flexibly used to make the primary grades more responsive to the needs of young children, and to minimize the need for remediation when these students are older, the changes which should be made are at the state and local levels.

Other recommendations include:

- requiring teachers and administrators to have training in child development;
- adopting policies to improve communication among parents, teachers, and caregivers, and to support parents becoming involved in their children's education;
- instituting transition procedures for children entering kindergarten from preschool, and those going to first grade from kindergarten;
- eliminating practices which hinder children from entering kindergarten when they are legally able to attend; and
- prohibiting the use of standardized tests to assess children's progress, instead using methods which include observation.

Copies of the report are available for $8 each from the Southern Regional Education Board, 592 10th Street, NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30318.

Constructing Curriculum

Teaching Strategies' ***Constructing Curriculum for the Primary Grades*** was published at the end of September. Authored by Diane Trister Dodge, Judy R. Jablon, and Toni S. Bickart, it provides a practical framework for making curriculum effective for children in the primary grades. The book is written for classroom teachers, but its user-friendly format and straight-to-the-point writing offer insights to others (parents, administrators, and other education professionals) about what creates successful classrooms.

Based on the assumption that teachers, with the input and involvement of families, are the ultimate decision-makers in their classrooms, the authors propose a framework "which allows teachers to construct and clarify their own ideas and beliefs about the teaching practices that work best for them and the children they teach." Their framework provides a practical way to organize and implement curriculum in the primary grades.

The framework is based on a knowledge of child development (how children grow and develop emotionally, socially, cognitively, and physically); a respect for the unique qualities of each child in the context of her/his family and culture; and an understanding of how children think and learn.

The authors define curriculum as a plan to achieve the fundamental goals of education. These goals are in place to assist children to:

- gain an increasing understanding of themselves and the world around them;
- develop the dispositions to be a learner — curiosity, independence, responsibility, initiative, creativity, willingness to take risks, to ask questions, and to persevere;
- acquire the skills they need to be successful learners — language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social inquiry, and the ability to express their ideas through the arts and technology; and
- function as contributing members of a community by developing social skills and by making choices that are good for their own welfare and helpful to society at large.

These goals of a developmentally appropriate approach to curriculum are designed to answer the question: "What do we want children to learn during the primary grades that will help them to become successful learners, lead fulfilling lives, and contribute to society?"

Written by and with teachers, ***Constructing Curriculum*** provides a framework for making decisions about curriculum. Six of its chapters provide a foundation for the implementation of curriculum: Knowing the Children You Teach, Building a Classroom Community, Establishing a Structure for the Classroom, Guiding Children's Learning, Assessing Children's Learning, and Building a Partnership with Families.

Five chapters discuss approaches to content areas: Language and Literacy, Mathematical Thinking, Social Studies, Scientific Thinking, and the Arts and Technology. Throughout the framework, assessment is considered an integral part of curriculum. In fact, there are close ties between ***Constructing Curriculum*** and ***The Work Sampling System***, the performance-based assessment system developed by Samuel Meisels and his colleagues at the University of Michigan. Dodge and her co-authors used Meisels' performance indicators for each domain of development to inform their thinking about skills and knowledge in the content chapters and about the role of assessment in curriculum planning and implementation.

Constructing Curriculum was piloted in elementary schools in the District of Columbia and in Brattleboro, Vermont; it is credited with helping to improve the learning environments in both urban and rural schools. It is a practical guide, including past and current research, with many examples to support teachers in developing ongoing curriculum for their classrooms. The authors "hope that this book will validate what teachers already know, help them construct a clear philosophy for themselves, and give them the confidence to follow their own beliefs."

The 427 page paperback guide costs $39.95 and may be ordered from Teaching Strategies, Inc., P. O. Box 42243, Washington, DC 20015, 800-637-3652 (phone), 202-364-7273 (fax).

Transition to School

In the November 1994 issue of **Phi Delta Kappan**, Sharon Landesman Ramey and Craig T. Ramey have authored an article entitled ***"The Transition to School: Why the First Few Years Matter for A Lifetime."*** Looking beyond academic achievement, the Rameys discuss eight signs which indicate that children have made a successful transition to school and the formative primary grades:

1. Children like school and look forward to going to school regularly.
2. Children will show steady growth in academic skills.
3. Parents will become actively involved in their children's education—at home, in school, and in the community.
4. Classroom environments will be emotionally positive ones for both teachers and children.
5. Teachers and families will value each other.
6. Schools will celebrate the cultural diversity in their communities and in the nation as a whole.
7. Developmentally appropriate practices will be visible in classrooms.
8. The community will show consistent investment in the education of children and will strive to increase the learning opportunities available.

As descriptors of the "emotionally positive" classroom environments which they prescribe, the authors highlight some of the "adult/child transactions that can promote cognitive development within environments that are influenced by the child, are responsive to the child, capture and hold the child's interest, and are trustworthy and comprehensible to the child." These "essential minimal elements" are necessary to promote cognitive development and good attitudes toward learning: encouragement of exploration; mentoring in basic skills; celebration of developmental advances; guided rehearsal and extension of new skills; protection from inappropriate disapproval, teasing, or punishment; and a rich and responsive language environment.

Copies of the article are available from the Director of Administrative Services, Phi Delta Kappan, P. O. Box 789, Bloomington, Indiana 47402 (812-339-1156).

Perspectives on Quality

Lilian G. Katz has offered a new way of addressing the issue of quality in early childhood care and education programs, including primary-grade classrooms. Katz states that in current practice the definition of quality is related to variables such as adult/child ratios, group size, and "a set of pedagogical practices subsumed under the rubric of developmentally appropriate practice." Such a conceptualization of quality is too limiting, she argues.

Katz describes five perspectives on quality:

- a top-down perspective, in which the quality of early childhood programs is assessed by examining selected features from the perspective of the program administrator and of those responsible for the supervision and licensing of the program;
- a bottom-up perspective, in which quality is assessed by attempting to determine how the program is actually experienced by the participating children;
- an outside/inside perspective, in which quality is determined by assessing how the program is experienced by the families it serves;
- an inside perspective, which takes into account how the program is experienced by staff members responsible for it; and
- the ultimate perspective, which considers how the community and the larger society are served by the program.

Katz believes that each of the five perspectives contributes in an unique way to the determination of overall program quality, and that the expansion of early childhood programs in the last decade should make educators more aware of the complexity of assessing program quality.

Her article, ***"Perspectives on the Quality of Early Childhood Programs,"*** appeared in the November 1994 issue of Phi Delta Kappan. Copies of the article are available from the Director of Administrative Services, Phi Delta Kappan, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, Indiana 47402 (812-339-1156).

WELCOMES AND APPRECIATIONS

An exciting collaboration marks the beginning of the second year of publishing ***Of Primary Interest***. The **Iowa Department of Education** and the **Nebraska Department of Education** have joined with the Colorado Department to cooperatively support this endeavor aimed at providing support, communication, and networking for the parents and teachers of primary-level children. The Early Childhood Initiatives team at the Colorado Department welcomes the opportunity of working together with Susan Andersen (Iowa) and Harriet Egertson (Nebraska) and their colleagues.

The Colorado Department of Education wishes to again thank the **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** for the Membership Action Group Grant, which supported the creation of ***Of Primary Interest*** last year, and the **Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC)** for the funding it provided for the publication of the first year's issues.

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First Impressions / Primeras Impresiones

The Texas Education Agency has published ***First Impressions / Primeras Impresiones: Report of the Task Force on Early Childhood and Elementary Education.*** In order to respond to the issues of diversity, retention, inappropriate curriculum and assessment, and the changing nature of schooling, the Task Force has developed a vision of what early childhood and elementary education should look like in Texas.

The cornerstone of the Report is the implementation of developmentally appropriate educational practices. The Task Force defines *developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary education* as programs and practices which: "(1) focus on the principles and stages of child development; (2) foster individual interests and understanding; (3) value cultural and linguistic diversity; and (4) recognize the social nature of learning." Such programs and practices sacrifice neither "academic quality nor intellectual rigor."

The Task Force's vision includes four key elements:

A. Developmentally appropriate curriculum which uses flexible grouping of students on a continuous basis for active, participatory involvement and presentation of knowledge through interdisciplinary themes and units.

B. School calendars which permit flexible and extended-year schedules to accommodate each child's learning style and pace.

C. Abundant opportunities for each child to attain high standards of achievement through acceleration and enrichment of all learning activities on a continuous basis.

D. Performance-based assessments that demonstrate continuous student progress toward academic standard, and allow continuous movement through the system by the students upon attainment of benchmark standards.

The following strategies are recommended as means through which developmentally appropriate early childhood and elementary programs may be implemented in the state:

- Nurture the full intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth of each child. Recognize that each child's growth occurs over developmental stages, tempered by a learning style and pace that is individually unique.
- Provide developmentally appropriate curriculum that is age-appropriate, interdisciplinary, enriched to support each child's academic and personal growth, and connected to clearly articulated state and local educational goals.
- Support educational success with a firm foundation in reading. Assure that reading instruction is age- and individually-appropriate and supports the complex interactions between reader and text. Structure the reading curriculum to provide explicit and systematic integration of phonemic awareness training and understanding of alphabetic principles within meaning-based literature- and language-rich learning environments.
- Group students flexibly to support individual learning needs. Do not use past academic performance or perceived ability to track students.
- Eliminate retention. Employ curriculum, instructional practices, and schedules and calendars that overcome the need to retain students in grade.
- Provide a flexible, seamless learning continuum from prekindergarten to grade 12.
- Implement performance-based assessment strategies that adhere to developmentally appropriate principles of curriculum and instruction.
- Prepare early childhood and elementary educators with programs that integrate knowledge of pedagogy and child development.

Continued on page 2

First Impressions / Primeras Impresiones

Continued from page 1

- Support early childhood and elementary educators and students with student-staff ratios that are predicated upon the developmental needs of children.
- Actively solicit meaningful parent and family participation in the education of their children.
- Coordinate early care programs, school- and community-based early childhood education programs, and elementary programs to assure a seamless transition between programs and continuous educational progress for each child.
- Establish partnerships with health and human service agencies, child care providers, community organizations, cultural institutions, and local businesses to meet a range of individual and community educational, health, and human service needs.

For more information, or to obtain a copy of ***First Impressions / Primeras Impresiones***, contact the Texas Education Agency, Publications Distribution Office, 1701 North Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701-1494, (512)-463-9734, and refer to Publication Number GE4 170 04.

WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

The 1995 Week of the Young Child is scheduled for April 23-29. The theme is EARLY YEARS ARE LEARNING YEARS: MAKE THEM COUNT! For more information contact NAEYC at 1-800-424-2460.

"Programs for young children should not be seen as either play-oriented or academic. Rather, developmentally appropriate practice, whether in a preschool or a primary classroom, should respond to the natural curiosity of young children, reaffirm a sense of self, promote positive dispositions towards learning, and help build increasingly complex skills in the use of language, problem-solving, and cooperation."

- Joan Lombardi

TEXAS' STRATEGIES

THE OLD SYSTEM	THE NEW SYSTEM
Children adapt to a pre-organized school structure.	Schools are organized to accommodate active student involvement in learning.
Learning occurs in distinct, nine-month intervals; students not meeting expectations are remediated and/or retained.	A flexible calendar offers abundant time for acceleration and enrichment; early prevention and intervention ensure that children are not allowed to fall behind from the beginning.
Learning is organized and regulated in terms of seat time.	Curriculum allows for continuous progress; content meets rigorous standards; it is relevant, engaging, and meaningful to children.
Teachers impart knowledge through lecture.	Educators facilitate learning, organizing learning around student experiences, strengths, and educational goals.
Grouping is by ability or age.	Flexible grouping occurs across age, ability and achievement levels; teachers reconfigure groups based on learning needs.
Evaluation of student and school performance are based solely on standardized test results.	Evaluation is continuous, using multiple performance-based assessments to inform instruction and evaluate programs.
Education system is separate from other community systems and services.	Education system collaborates with other community systems and services to serve all children and their families.

TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT	PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT
Takes snapshot of the student's performance; highly susceptible to day-to-day variations in behavior and interest	Portfolios grow with the student; checklists show progress; present longitudinal picture
Isolated activity; disrupts instruction	Ongoing process; not intrusive to instruction
Age and grade are important variables	Assessment organized around individual student; indicates learning needs
Limited ability to measure progress in all developmental domains	Checklists can include outcomes in all academic, social, and physical domains
Test design provides limited assessment of thinking and communication	Able to assess higher-order thinking, communication skills, and problem-solving
Drives local curriculum to take the form of narrow, isolated tasks	Draws upon local curriculum objectives and outcome standards

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RESOURCE LIST
February 1995

Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Primary Education

ERIC Documents

Mallory, Bruce L.; New, Rebecca S., Eds. 1994. **Diversity & Developmentally Appropriate Practices: Challenges for Early Childhood Education.** Available from Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam, New York, NY 10027. ED365469; 295p.

Current conceptualizations of what is appropriate in early childhood education are overly narrow in their interpretation of the role of the teacher and in their understanding of cultural and developmental diversity. This book of readings discusses various issues surrounding diversity, inclusion, and appropriate early education practices.

Barbour, Nita H.; Seefeldt, Carol. 1993. **Developmental Continuity across Preschool and Primary Grades: Implications for Teachers.** Wheaton, MD: Association for Childhood Education International. Available from ACEI Publications, 11501 Georgia Avenue, Suite 315, Wheaton, MD 20902; and from EDRS. ED360059; 97p.

Developmental continuity refers to designing early childhood instruction that provides learning experiences based on children's prior knowledge, follows a natural progression across preschool and the early grades, and allows progress at each child's rate and style of learning. Common to the many ways of providing developmental continuity is the idea that teachers, parents, and administrators work together to provide a continuum of developmentally appropriate educational experiences for children. This book is a resource for teachers who wish to put developmental continuity into practice in their classrooms.

Wood, Chip. 1994. **Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-12.** Greenfield, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children (NFC). Available from NFC, 71 Montague City Road, Greenfield, MA 01301; and from EDRS. ED368472; 174p.

Providing teachers and parents with a quick reference on important childhood developmental issues for ages 4 through 12, this book begins by discussing how developmental issues affect administrative and classroom decisions regarding mixed-age and ability grouping, retention, food, exercise, the structure of the school day, and racial and cultural questions. Each of the nine chapters, one for each age, includes a narrative describing general developmental characteristics relating to behavior, emotional needs, and social interactions, and concludes with sets of charts allowing readers to identify developmental "yardsticks" for a given age. A set of curriculum charts summarizing the developmental continuum between ages 4 and 12 is included.

Sumner, Deborah, Ed. 1993. **Whole Teaching: Keeping Children in the Center of Curriculum and Instruction. SDE Sourcebook** (6th Ed.). Peterborough, NH: Society for Developmental Education. Available from SDE, Route 202, P.O. Box 577, Peterborough, NH 03458. ED367466; 354p.

This sourcebook contains articles, resources, and sample teaching materials to assist practitioners implementing developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom. The sourcebook contains reprints of more than 40 journal articles, topical bibliographies and resource lists, and sample teaching materials.

Northeast Foundation for Children. 1993. **A Notebook for Teachers: Making Changes in the Elementary Curriculum** (Revised Edition). Greenfield, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children. Available from NFE, 71 Montague City Road, Greenfield, MA 01301; and from EDRS. ED369532; 83p.

This guide for teachers and parents examines child development knowledge, the origins of developmental curriculum, and approaches to implementing such a curriculum in elementary schools, particularly in the primary grades.

Burruss, Bette; Fairchild, Nawanna. 1993. **The Primary School: A Resource Guide for Parents.** Lexington, KY: Partnership for Kentucky School Reform and Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. Available from The Prichard Committee, Book Order, P.O. Box 1658, Lexington, KY 40592-1658; and from EDRS. ED357886; 124p.

This guide provides information and strategies for Kentucky parents to become better partners in the education of their primary school children. Included are an outline of a typical primary school student's day; explanations of how children learn and how instruction will change as schools move toward greater use of developmentally appropriate practices; characteristics of a quality primary school learning environment; lists of the learning goals and outcomes used in Kentucky schools, including assessment of students' abilities in core subjects; suggestions for parents to participate in their child's education; and a discussion of frequently asked questions about primary schools.

Addington, Brenda Burton; Hinton, Samuel. 1993. **Developmentally Appropriate Practices in the Primary Program: A Survey of Primary School Teachers.** Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, November 10-12, 1993). ED368494; 20p.

Under the Kentucky Education Reform Act, public schools in Kentucky that once contained K-3 children at relatively the same age have been replaced with groups of children of varied ages and abilities; sedentary seat work has been replaced by concrete learning activities and cooperative learning opportunities; report cards have been replaced by narrative progress reports, portfolios, and more frequent teacher conferences with students and parents. This study assessed perceptions of 37 teachers from 27 schools about implementing DAP with multi-age and

multi-ability groups. Results showed that the majority of teachers thought the program provided an enjoyable atmosphere for teachers and students, where both were excited about learning; that teaching split grades was more difficult than teaching in a traditional classroom; and that the number of students was too high to successfully implement working with the students in small groups and in teaching to the whole group. Subjects were also divided on the use of computers and other technologies in their classrooms.

Franklin County School District. 1993. **Effects That the Developmentally Appropriate Process Makes on Curriculum of a Rural Elementary School**. Meadville, MS: Franklin County School District. ED360082; 28p.

Franklin Lower Elementary School in Meadville, Mississippi, began a process of restructuring to become a developmentally appropriate school by using hands-on materials, focusing on whole language and emphasizing the development of thinking skills in 1988. Results of 1992 assessments (achievement tests, student behavior records, and attitude surveys of students, parents and teachers) indicated that: (1) for first graders, average achievement test scores were 84% for reading and 81% for math, both above the national average; (2) for second graders, average achievement test scores were 54% for reading and 78% for math, also above the national average; (3) absences at the school decreased each year since the 1988-89 school year for students overall; (4) discipline referrals decreased from 100 during the 1988-89 school year to just over 20 in 1992.

ERIC Journal Articles

Galen, Harlene. (1994). **Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Myths and Facts**. *Principal* 73(5, May): 20-22. EJ483345.

Describes developmental appropriateness as a philosophy, not a curriculum. Despite using alternative learning strategies such as guided play, teachers are in control, facilitate real academic learning, and build on what they already know. DAP can meet the needs of children from varied backgrounds.

Stipek, Deborah, and others. (1994). **Making Parents Your Allies.** *Young Children* 49(3, Mar): 4-9. EJ479986.

Discusses ways in which teachers can educate parents about the necessity for DAP at the preschool and primary levels despite widespread parental preferences for an inappropriate, structured academic curriculum. Teachers can explain the purposes of developmentally appropriate curriculum to parents, provide them with appropriate suggestions and materials, and invite them to school programs.

Charlesworth, Rosalind, and others. (1993). **Measuring the Developmental Appropriateness of Kindergarten Teachers' Beliefs and Practices.** *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 8(3, Sep): 255-276. EJ474784.

A survey intended to measure kindergarten teachers' beliefs about and practices related to developmentally appropriate education was administered to 204 teachers, and teachers in 20 classrooms were observed. Relationships between scores on several factors and teachers' use of developmentally appropriate or inappropriate classroom practices were found.

Bullock, Janis R. (1993). **Children's Temperament: How Can Teachers and Classrooms Be More Responsive?** *Early Child Development and Care* 88: 53-59. EJ473187.

Arguing that knowing the temperamental differences of young children can assist classroom teachers in being more responsive to children's various needs and in providing developmentally appropriate classrooms, this article recommends adaptations of the classroom environment to many interaction and learning styles.

Katz, Lilian G. (1993). **Child-Sensitive Curriculum and Teachers**. *Young Children* 48(6, Sep): 2. EJ469387.

Proposes replacing the term "child-centered" with "child-sensitive" to indicate more accurately the major role of teachers in determining the curriculum and activities offered to young children. In contrast to the laissez-faire, child-indulgent approach of many child-centered programs, a child-sensitive approach would encourage teachers to capitalize on children's natural impulse to learn through investigation.

Mitchell, Anne L. (1993). **Shouldn't Preschool People Advocate for Better Elementary Schools, Too?** *Young Children* 48(5, Jul): 58-62. EJ465929.

Advocates the implementation, in elementary school programs, of the same developmentally appropriate principles and practices that govern good preschool programs. These practices involve understanding children and their levels of development, working with the whole child, fostering integrated learning, and encouraging parent participation.

Schweinhart, Lawrence J. (1993). **Observing Young Children in Action: The Key to Early Childhood Assessment.** *Young Children* 48(5, Jul): 29-33. EJ465920.

Maintaining that new practices such as performance-based assessment that are consistent with the early childhood profession's process goals need to be developed and that testing of young children that is not developmentally appropriate constitutes misassessment, this article promotes observational assessment that uses anecdotal notes and that complements assessment by developmental scales of established reliability and validity.

Hills, Tynette W. (1993). **Assessment in Context—Teachers and Children at Work**. *Young Children* 48(5, Jul): 20-28. EJ465919.

Discusses the purposes of assessment in programs for young children, concentrating on how observation-based assessment can be used as part of a developmentally appropriate assessment process serving children, parents, teachers, and administrators.

References identified with an ED (ERIC document) or EJ (ERIC journal) number are cited in the ERIC database. Most documents are available in ERIC microfiche collections at more than 825 locations worldwide, and can be ordered through EDRS: (800) 443-ERIC. Some ERIC documents are available from the original publisher; this availability is indicated in the reference. Journal articles are available from the original journal, interlibrary loan services, or article reproduction clearinghouses, such as: UMI (800) 732-0616; or ISI (800) 523-1850.

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The Colorado Quality Standards

The Colorado Department of Education has issued ***Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education Services.*** The planning document has been in Colorado communities for the last two years in the form of a working draft which has been "field tested," and for which comments have been sought. Based on the input received in this process and on the contributions of leading professionals in Colorado, the draft version has been significantly revised.

These ***Quality Standards*** reflect the values of parents, educators, administrators, and policymakers across Colorado who are striving for the best possible education and care for young children. They do not provide mandates for the content of instruction, but rather offer guidelines for how instruction should be implemented. They are a working document designed to guide early childhood care and education programs in their movement toward quality services for all young children. As a means of self-evaluation, the ***Quality Standards*** can help programs assess the goals they have achieved and those which they are seeking to attain. This evaluation will also provide information regarding training, technical assistance, and other resource needs. As a part of the Colorado Department of Education's review process, programs will be expected to demonstrate that they are using the document for program development and staff inservice planning.

Two years ago the working draft merged the "best practices" for early childhood special education programs and the highly respected standards developed by **NAEYC**. The ***Quality Standards*** now incorporate enhancements in the areas of family-centered services, community collaboration to meet children's needs, diversity, transition, the roles and functions of the teaching team, and extensions of the standards into the primary grades (K-3) for children through the age of eight. These enhancements and extensions were developed by consulting with representatives from organizations such as the American Montessori Society; Association Montessori Internationale; Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children; Colorado Association for Family Child Care; Colorado Department of Human Services; Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment; Community Development Institute Technical Assistance Support Center; Head Start Resource Access Project; High/Scope Educational Research Foundation; local child care centers, community colleges, private schools, school districts, and universities; National Association for the Education of Young Children; Office of the Governor; and other state departments of education. These representatives collaboratively used documents from their organizations, such as the Child Care Professional Credential and the Head Start Performance Standards, in the revision.

The ***Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education Services*** are available for purchase by interested parties outside of Colorado at a cost of $25.00. Inquiries may be directed to: Colorado Foundation for Families and Children, 1580 Logan Street - Suite 740, Denver, CO 80203, (303)-894-2149.

Transition Activities Planning

The Oregon Department of Education, in conjunction with its Head Start - State Collaboration Project, has identified 12 activities which might be incorporated into planning transitions for children as they move from preschool to kindergarten and the primary grades. These activities are:

1. Fall Kindergarten Parent Meeting
   Kindergarten staff welcome parents into their children's classrooms, share information, discuss parent concerns, and promote parent involvement. Parents are also informed about the Kindergarten Parent Packet Program, through which information and learning activities are supplied to parents on an ongoing basis throughout the school year.

2. Shared/Cross Training
   Neighborhood and community early childhood professionals from the private and public sectors are invited by kindergarten staff to participate in school staff development opportunities. Elementary school staff are encouraged to attend community early childhood trainings offered in the private and public sectors. Joint planning and program implementation are encouraged.

3. School Liaison Identification
   A staff person at the elementary school is designated to be a liaison between the school and private and public preschool programs and parents.

4. Buddy School System
   Working partnerships are developed between elementary schools and preschools in the community. Activities are designed which encourage class to class, child to child, and/or teacher to teacher interaction and communication.

5. Kindergarten Parent Packet Program
   This information and learning activities distribution system is adopted by all elementary schools. Community preschools introduce the program to incoming kindergarten parents in the spring.

6. Parent Classes and Programs
   Classes and programs for parents, which are held in elementary schools, are publicized and opened to parents of preschoolers.

7. Early Childhood Teams
   The elementary school early childhood teams (K-2) are broadened to include program staff members of private and public preschools. The resultant teams meet three times a year to discuss mutual interests and concerns.

8. Referral of Children With Special Needs
   Early contacts between elementary schools and preschool children with special needs, and their families, are encouraged and supported. Preschools begin to refer children in January.

9. Kindergarten Registration
   Dates for kindergarten registration are publicized throughout preschool programs.

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Transition Activities Planning
Continued from page 3

10. Transfer of General Information
Neighborhood and community preschools share names and addresses of preschool parents with elementary schools. The schools contact these prospective kindergarten parents and issue invitations to kindergarten orientation.

11. Kindergarten Orientation
The elementary schools provide an overview of kindergarten for prospective families.

12. Transfer of Children's Files for Incoming Kindergartners
Preschools physically transfer student records to the receiving elementary schools.

For more information about ***Oregon's Early Childhood Transition Plan***, contact Dell Ford, Specialist with the Oregon Head Start - State Collaboration Project, at the Oregon Department of Education, 700 Pringle Parkway, SE, Salem, Oregon 97310-0290, (503)-378-5585.

The enclosed *Resource List for Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Primary Education* was developed especially for *Of Primary Interest*. Thanks go to Bernard Cesarone, Diane Rothenberg, and their colleagues at ERIC.

Readying Schools for Young Children

Dialogue continues around the first of the national goals for education: by the year 2000, all children will start school ready to learn. One of the chief proponents of schools being readied for children, rather than children being readied for schools, is Sharon Lynn Kagan, senior associate at the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University. Kagan has stated that in readying schools for young children, parents and early childhood care and education professionals need to be deliberate as they set priorities and implement strategies.

Kagan offers two approaches to this aspect of changing schools, the first involving "think strategies, the mental precursors to action" and the second focusing on "action steps that can be undertaken in total or in part."

Think Strategies

1. Conceptualize ready schools within the context of broader school and social reform.
2. Recognize that the needs of young children and their families will be diverse and may differ from those of older children and their families.
3. Recognize that ready schools need to exist within "ready communities."

Action Strategies

1. Create the most pedagogically robust, developmentally appropriate environments for learning that are feasible.
2. Create and ensure ongoing linkages with and supports to and from families.
3. Create linkages with community services.
4. Commit to community building.

According to Kagan, the early childhood care and education movement, like other reform movements, cannot be successful unless this nation accepts the social responsibility for its children, and citizens refuse to tolerate ambiguity regarding the role of schools in American society. Schools which are ready to serve young children and their families, she says, are schools which are, in fact, ready to benefit the nation.

Her article, ***"Readying Schools for Young Children: Polemics and Priorities,"*** appeared in the November 1994 issue of **Phi Delta Kappan**. Copies of the article are available from the Director of Administrative Services, **Phi Delta Kappan**, P. O. Box 789, Bloomington, Indiana 47402, (812)-339-1156.

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TRANSITIONS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Milly Cowles, Ph.D.

The use of "transitions" as the word to describe the schooling issues and problems children and families face in moving from location to location or level to level or curriculum to curriculum is relatively new. *What are "transitions?" Why read or worry about them? What difference does it make to know about them?*

First, and very important, educators and parents have been concerned about the effect of change in the life of children throughout this entire century, and a lot of important information is available that was written a long time ago (particularly in the 30's, 40's, and 50's). Much of this wisdom is largely ignored by people who are speaking and writing about transition today. Perhaps the reason that earlier information is not incorporated into current discussions is that words other than "transition" were used by writers when discussing this topic. Current seers can even be quoted as saying that there has been little or no research or interest about this issue in the past.

Transitions, in today's world, refers to both articulation and continuity issues. It is an important topic that calls for immediate action and attention.

Primarily the two labels or handles that previously described what is now called transition were "articulation" and "continuity." **Articulation** was used to describe the events that occur as children move from one level to another, such as from kindergarten to first grade. **Continuity** most often explained the learning experiences of each child at each level and the individual's moving upward through educational levels in a smooth sequential manner within each part. These two terms were most often used together; statements such as "Children suffer educationally because of articulation and continuity problems that are not being addressed by the school personnel" were common in educational writing. **Transitions**, now in today's world, refers to both articulation and continuity issues, and it is an important topic that calls for immediate action and attention.

In the earlier years, there was a lot of attention directed to problems learners faced as changes occurred in their school lives. The **Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)** published an informative, most significant, and fascinating yearbook that reported a study involving 3,000 children in 11 states—from Florida to California, from Texas to Oregon, from New York to Minnesota. The research was focused on what children saw as having helped or interfered in their progress in school. Interestingly, they were encouraged to tell about 'anything' that was significant to them.

The problem areas identified by 453 children in the primary grades (K-3) were as follows:

- moving to a new community (mentioned by 35.5% of the students),
- moving to a new "school" level (mentioned by 4.0%),
- promotion/not getting promoted/even just worrying about it (4.4%),
- retention/being retained/worrying about the possibility (5.0%),
- teacher behaviors (14.3%),
- curriculum (16.5%),
- rewards (1.4%),
- punishment (4.4%),
- evaluation (1.5%),
- illness (4.3%), and
- accidents (2.7%).

More than one-third of the reported events that children believed to have affected them had to do with moving, followed in number by the areas of teacher behaviors and curriculum. While it has long been noted that children may not be able to explain all of their feelings or reactions, it still remains extremely important to find out what they do believe. The **ASCD** study showed that large numbers of young children identified three categories

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Transitions

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of events that they thought to have greatly influenced what happened to them in school. The authors urged that principles of growth and development and learning be incorporated into every school, irrespective of level or type, and that educational objectives and curriculum be fit into plans that were designed for children's developmental levels.

Later in the 1960s, after **Head Start** became a success nationally, there was again an interest in transitions, which resulted in the development of what came to be known as **Follow Through** programs or models. They have been thoroughly reviewed and analyzed many times; however, it is important here to say that the primary purpose of each one of those well-funded programs was *to provide articulation and continuity of learning activities and services from Head Start to the elementary school.* Most of the stated concern was in medical, social services, and academic (reading, writing, and arithmetic) transition problems. Yet, only a few years earlier, according to the **ASCD** research, children's reported issues had been with changes in their own lives, curriculum, and teachers' behaviors. Now, even more time has passed, and the most recent literature concentrates on issues children face either with leaving preschool for kindergarten, going from Head Start to "real" school, moving from childcare to kindergarten, or the mainstreaming of special needs children.

Regularly for the past 25 years, expectations of children have become more and more rigid in too many settings. In too many places in which policy is determined about what they are to achieve, there seems to be a lack of knowledge of how children learn.

If we combine what is being advocated in the 90's with all of the older work of the past 60 years, it probably is necessary to consider that each child who leaves her home setting for any kind of institutional education and care is the one who has to make the adjustment necessary to function successfully each and every day. We know that some changes are hard on anyone of any age, but that of all the ages and stages, children birth through adolescence are the most vulnerable. Of these, the very young are most at risk. Since this is a true developmental statement and not merely someone's opinion, the following five suggestions are examples of steps that will be necessary to support children through the thousands of transitions that are inevitable in all lives:

(1) Fundamental principles of child development must be learned by everyone who works with children, including their own parents or guardians.

(2) Thoughtfully developed educational objectives should be identified for every level of development, age being only one of the considerations.

(3) A new examination of the bases for the organization of the curriculum and of expectations for assessment needs to be grounded on the knowledge of how children learn. We must revisit the historical roots of early childhood care and education and project the future.

(4) Professionals and institutions need to know what was available to the child and what she accomplished (as is reasonable) in all prior settings. Parents and guardians should be given the same information. Parents and professionals alike need to be aware of the "self-fulfilling prophecy."

(5) Professionals should recognize and plan for problems which children are likely to face. Each institution has to be accountable for making life as positive and pleasant as is possible for young children. All available community agencies should be used to assist in the process.

Anytime a person or an institutional setting does not accept children and learn where they are functioning comfortably, articulation, continuity, and transitions are empty, meaningless words. Time and time again, it has been found that children achieve higher in flexible and comfortable settings. Yet, regularly for the past 25 years, expectations of children have become more and more rigid in too many settings. In too many places in which policy is determined about what they are to achieve, there seems to be a lack of knowledge of how children learn.

Unfortunately, for us as educators, we are about the only champions that children have left. The challenge is ours.

Annotated Bibliography

Appalachia Educational Laboratory. ***Early Childhood Transitions: Preparing Children and Families for Change.*** (Published in 1995, the newest guidebook, dealing with transitions and containing an excellent bibliography, is available from the Laboratory, P. O. Box 1348, Charleston, West Virginia.)

Kohler, Patty, et al. ***Transitions Procedures for Preschool Children,*** **DIMENSIONS**, Spring 1994. (This is a good review of a school district's work with special needs children; it is available from the Southern Early Childhood Association, P. O. Box 56130, Little Rock, Arkansas.)

Southeastern Regional Vision for Education. ***Transitions.*** (A 37-page document contains an extensive bibliography that chronicles the work that has been done in recent years. It is available at nominal cost from SRVE, 345 South Magnolia Drive, Tallahassee, Florida 32301-2950.)

Swenson, Esther J. (ed). ***A Look at Continuity in the School Program.*** Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Yearbook, 1958, 307 pages. (This is probably the most extensive look into what children report as problems in school, and the annotated bibliography reveals the richness of the work done at the time. Anyone interested in transitions will learn a lot from this publication from ASCD, 1250 North Pitt Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-1453.)

Vail, Cynthia O. and Scott, Kristin S. ***Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten for Children With Special Needs,*** **DIMENSIONS**, Spring 1994. (An excellent bibliography/checklist/discussion of transitions is available from the Southern Early Childhood Association, P. O. Box 56130, Little Rock, Arkansas.)

Milly Cowles is Distinguished Service Professor and Dean Emerita, University of Alabama at Birmingham, and a consulting editor of ***Young Children***, the journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Dr. Cowles wrote this article expressly for ***Of Primary Interest*** and retains the copyright. She may be addressed at 60 Springwater Chase, Newnan, Georgia 30265.

RESPONDING TO MISINFORMATION ABOUT DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

Recently advocates have observed an increase in direct attacks against the concept of developmentally appropriate practice as defined by the **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**. Some of these critiques have appeared in newspapers, while others have been presented to policymakers. In general, these attacks misrepresent the concept by saying things like **NAEYC** "prohibits teaching the alphabet or multiplication tables," that children do "whatever strikes their fancy," and that "children will learn to read when they are ready to read." Each of these statements is a distortion of the position statements, and advocates need to be clear about the truth.

First, developmentally appropriate practice does not prohibit direct instruction, nor does it prohibit reciting the alphabet or the multiplication tables. Because we know that individual differences are to be expected, we advocate using a variety of teaching strategies to help all children succeed in school. The concern is when instruction is limited to rote memorization, and children do not demonstrate understanding or the ability to apply the learning in solving problems or in new contexts. Of course, we want preschool and kindergarten children exposed to the alphabet; what we do not want is curriculum that is limited to learning the letters in isolation.

What we find inappropriate for 4- and 5-year-olds is using "whole group, teacher directed instruction **almost exclusively** or **most of the time,** or expecting children to do paper-and-pencil tasks for inappropriately long periods of time." The position statements support learning basic skills in meaningful context. The position is opposed to drill and practice on "isolated skills." Teaching basic skills in meaningful context is especially important for preschool children who have not had regular exposure to books and reading in their homes. Similarly, what is individually appropriate for some children may be more structure in which teachers assist them in learning to make decisions and persist with tasks.

The position statement on developmentally appropriate practice for primary grades specifically states, *"subskills such as learning letters, phonics, and word recognition are taught as needed to individual children and small groups."* It also states, *"technical skills are taught as needed to accomplish larger goals (language, writing, spelling, and reading ability), not as the goal itself."*

Nowhere does the document advocate children doing "what strikes their fancy." The statement says that teachers prepare the environment and children choose from among a variety of learning areas that the teacher prepares. Teachers are expected to prepare instructionally valuable learning opportunities for children and to facilitate their learning through a variety of strategies. Facilitating learning can take many forms, including, but not limited to, direct instruction. Developmentally appropriate classrooms have clear structures in which children know what is expected; learn to work independently, in small groups, and in the large group; and learn to self-regulate their behavior. Children learn from teachers, but they also learn from each other as they solve problems in small groups. Teachers are expected to provide complex, challenging work for children.

The statement does not say "children will learn to read when they are ready to learn to read." What the statement calls for is using a variety of strategies, including, but not limited to, phonics, to ensure that all children do learn to read. The document calls for a more flexible timetable for learning to read, so that children who take longer to acquire literacy are not retained in kindergarten or first grade. A large body of research on retention consistently finds that retention does not help achievement.

One of the goals of the revision process to developmentally appropriate practice is to more clearly state some of these points so as to prevent misunderstanding as much as possible. Nevertheless, we know that some people who resist change or who have different goals for children will continue to circulate misinformation. As advocates for children, we have a responsibility to be as clear as possible in stating what we know and believe and to continue working to gain greater understanding among teachers so that their implementation more closely matches the goals.

This article appeared in the Volume 21, March 1995 issue of ***The Affiliate***, a quarterly publication for **NAEYC** Affiliate Groups, and is reprinted here with the express permission of the **National Association for the Education of Young Children**. Comments are welcomed and may be sent to **NAEYC** Affiliate Services, 1509 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-1426; telephoned to (202) 232-8777 or (800) 424-2460; or faxed to (202) 328-1846.

The document calls for a more flexible timetable for learning to read, so that children who take longer to acquire literacy are not retained in kindergarten or first grade. A large body of research on retention consistently finds that retention does not help achievement.

TRANSITIONS: CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Transitions to School, a publication focusing on recommended practices designed to facilitate a child's movement into kindergarten and the primary grades, has been published by the National Governors' Association. Written by Elizabeth Stief, Policy Analyst for the NGA's Children and Social Services Programs, the report summarizes what is known about successful early childhood transition services and highlights existing policies and approaches.

In discussing Goal One of the National Education Goals (*"By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn"*), Howard Dean, MD, Governor of Vermont and Chair of the National Governors' Association, explains in his foreword to ***Transitions to School*** that no one questions the importance of school readiness. Concerns have been voiced, however, about the advisability of focusing solely on the child, when in reality many schools may not be ready for young children.

Dean further writes that:
"there is a growing realization among policymakers that, although children must be ready to learn, schools also must be ready to teach. Unfortunately, as some schools have admirably sought to implement high standards for all students, they have increased inappropriate academic demands on young children or have instituted readiness tests that hinder children's entry into the public schools. Many experts have disputed the rationale behind the testing of young children as well as the value of early academic instruction. The National Education Goals Panel's Goal One advisory group has noted that the best way to reach high standards may be to attend to children's general well-being and provide learning environments and experiences rich in opportunities to explore, rather than to provide earlier formal academic instruction."
Consequently, Dean states that, as policymakers begin to look at a broader definition of readiness, they are also focusing on services that assist children in making the transition from early childhood care and education settings into school programs.

Transitions to School identifies many factors resulting in this attention to early childhood transitions. An increasing number of preschool-age children are involved in out-of-home early childhood care and education environments that are quite different in both philosophy and practice from the public schools. Kindergartens have become more widespread, but at the same time increasingly academic in their emphasis; many children, consequently, experience an early failure that may negatively affect their future success in school.

Other reasons for the focus on transitioning are the general agreement on the importance of the involvement of parents in their children's education, systemic education reform efforts, and interest in collaboration among service providers to better serve children and their families. Efforts to assist Head Start children successfully enter public schools began in the late 1960s, and since the 1980s strategies have been developed to facilitate the transitions of children with disabilities. The report states, however, that "the current interest in transitions is unique because it focuses on the needs of **all** children."

Her review of research and anecdotal evidence has resulted in Stief's compiling a list of the components of successful transition programs. Such programs include:

- quality preschool experiences
- quality elementary school experiences
- parent involvement
- a continuum of family-focused and community-based services
- communication and collaboration between preschool and elementary school staff
- preparation of children for the transition
- clear goals and objectives agreed upon by all parties involved
- a shared commitment to the successful transitions of young children
- shared decision-making among home, preschool, school, and community representatives
- cultural sensitivity
- specific assignment of roles and responsibilities among all parties, including interagency agreements
- training and technical assistance on collaboration and systems-building
- reasonable time and adequate fiscal resources to allow staff to carry out assigned roles

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Transition Activities in Schools With Kindergarten Classes
1989-90 School Year

Percentage of Schools Implementing the Activity	Transition Activity
10%	systematic communication between kindergarten teachers and previous caregivers or teachers about entering kindergarten children
11%	joint staff training with the participation of more than half of the staff of community preschool programs
12%	kindergarten curriculum designed to build on the preschool program
13%	formal transition policy
19%	information-sharing about children's developmental progress by more than half of the staff of community preschool programs
32%	visits by all children and parents prior to school entry
39%	informing parents of their rights and responsibilities in the public school system
47%	formal program for school visits
47%	involving parents in classroom activities designed to ease children's transition to school

from J. M. Love, M. E. Logue, J. V. Trudeau, and K. Thayer, ***Transitions to Kindergarten in American Schools*** (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Department of Education, 1992), as quoted in E. Stief's ***Transitions to School.***

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Current Recommendations

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- specific timelines for transition activities
- continuous program evaluation and improvement efforts.

The limited research which is available, Stief writes, indicates that transition services assist children in maintaining the gains brought about by early intervention programs. Such services also result in children having fewer problems adjusting to school, lower levels of stress, greater self-confidence, fewer classroom behavior problems, and less difficulty in reading. Because transitioning is proving effective, the National Governors' Association encourages states to also consider establishing early childhood units in elementary schools; revising assessment practices; reforming the licensing, training, and compensation of all early childhood teachers; and eliminating the practice of retention in the early grades.

Copies of ***Transitions to School*** are available at a cost of $15.00 each from the National Governors' Association, 444 North Capitol Street, Washington, DC 20001-1512, (202) 624-5300.

We need to be accountable for making life as positive and pleasant as is possible for young children.

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VYGOTSKY'S ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT

Deborah J. Leong, PhD and
Elena Bodrova, PhD

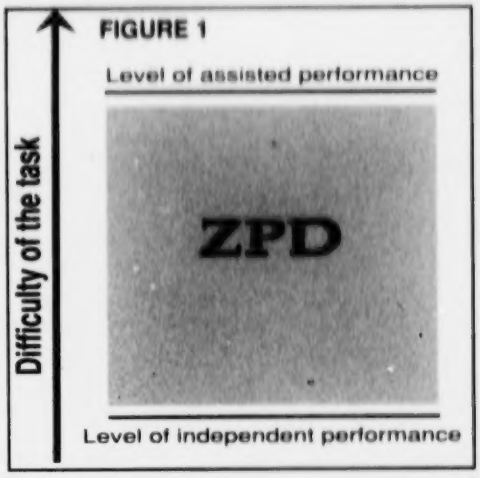
The zone of proximal development or ZPD, one of the most well-known of all of Vygotsky's concepts, is a way of conceptualizing the relationship between learning and development (Vygotsky, 1934/87). More and more early childhood education and child development textbooks, as well as professional journals and publications, have begun to use the ZPD as a way of describing how children learn and develop. In this article adapted from our book ***Tools of the Mind: The Vygotskian Approach to Early Childhood Education*** (Merrill/Prentice-Hall), we will describe the ZPD and discuss implications for teaching.

Definition of the Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky chose the word zone because he conceived development not as a point on a scale, but as a continuum of behaviors or degrees of maturation. By the word proximal (next to, close to), he meant that the zone is limited by those behaviors that will develop in the near future. *Proximal* means behaviors closest to emergence at any given time—not all possible behaviors that will eventually emerge.

For Vygotsky, development of a behavior occurs on two levels which form the boundaries of the ZPD. The lower level is the child's *independent performance*—what the child knows and can do alone. The higher level represents the maximum the child can reach with help and is called *assisted performance*. Between *maximally assisted performance* and *independent performance* lie varying degrees of partially assisted performances (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1



The skills and behaviors represented in the ZPD are dynamic and constantly changing. What the child does with some assistance today is what the child will do independently tomorrow. What requires maximum support and assistance today will be something the child can do with minimal help tomorrow. So the assisted performance level will change as the child develops.

Level of independent performance. In education and psychology, we have traditionally focused on what is developed or achieved by independent performance only. For example, we say that if five year-old Susan correctly adds 2 + 2 by herself, then she can add. Frank has learned to make the letter "N" only when he can draw it on his own. If there is a prompt by an adult, for instance when the teacher reminds Frank that an "'N' has one hump," then we say that the child has not "developed" or doesn't know the information yet. Vygotsky agreed that the level of *independent performance* is an important index of development, but he argued that it is not sufficient to completely describe development.

Level of assisted performance. The level of assisted performance is performance that includes those behaviors performed with the help of and/or interaction with another person—either an adult or peer. This interaction may involve giving hints and clues, rephrasing questions, asking the child to restate what has been said, asking the child what he understands, demonstrating a portion or the entire task, and so on. It can also be indirect interaction or help, like setting up the environment to facilitate practice of a specific set of skills. For example, a teacher can provide specially labeled sorting trays to encourage

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VYGOTSKY'S ZONE

Continued from page 1

classification. *Assisted performance* also includes interaction and talking to others who are present or imaginary, such as explaining something to a peer. Thus level of *assisted performance* describes any situation in which there are improvements in the child's mental activities as a result of social interaction.

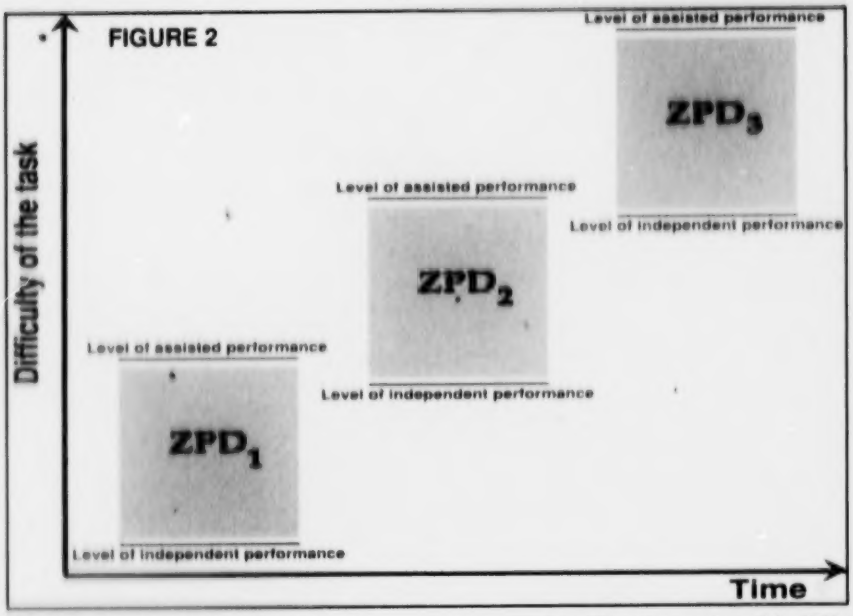
Dynamics, Variations, and Limits of the ZPD

The ZPD is not static but shifts as the child attains the higher level (See Figure 2). Thus, development involves a sequence of constantly changing zones. With each shift, the child becomes capable of learning more and more complex concepts and skills. What the child did only with assistance yesterday becomes the level of independent performance today, and a new level of assisted performance appears. This cycle is repeated over and over again, as the child climbs his way to complete acquisition of a body of knowledge, skill, strategy, discipline, or behavior.

The zone of proximal development is different for different areas of development or at different times during the acquisition process. For different areas of development the zone may vary in size. Some children require all possible assistance to make even small gains in learning. Other children make huge leaps with much less assistance.

At the same time, the size of the zone may vary for the same child from one area to another or at different times in the learning process. A highly verbal child may not have trouble acquiring concepts in reading comprehension, for example, but have great difficulties with long division. Vygotskians would interpret this as the child needing more assistance in one area than another. In addition, at various times in the process of learning, children respond to different types of assistance. Mary, who has been counting only a few weeks, needs more assistance closer to her level of independent performance than she will require three months later, after she has been counting for a while. At that time the ZPD and the amount a teacher can facilitate Mary's doing with assistance will be greater.

The zone of proximal development reveals the limits of the child's development at any specific time. The ZPD is not limitless—a child cannot be taught anything at any given time. Assisted performance is the maximum level at which a child can perform today. Children cannot be taught skills or behaviors that exceed their ZPD. Teresa and Linda, for example, may not be able to be taught to do handstands on the balance beam on a given day, because that skill is too far above their ZPD.



When a skill is outside of the ZPD, Vygotskians note that children generally ignore, fail to use, or incorrectly use that skill, strategy, or piece of information. This is how teachers will know if the assistance provided falls within the ZPD. Teachers must carefully chart which prompts, clues, hints, books, activities, or peer cooperative groupings have a desired effect on the child's learning. Teachers should not be afraid to try a higher level, but teachers need to listen to the child by paying attention to her/his reaction to attempts at the higher level of the ZPD.

Using the ZPD in the Classroom

The zone of proximal development has three important implications for learning/teaching:

(1) how assistance is provided to a child in performing a task,
(2) how children are assessed, and
(3) what is considered developmentally appropriate.

How we assist a child to perform a task. It is most common to think of the assisted performance level of the zone of proximal development in terms of "expert-novice" interactions, when one person has more knowledge than the other. In this type of interaction, most commonly occurring in direct teaching, it is the expert's responsibility to provide support and to direct the interaction so that the novice can acquire the necessary behavior. These expert-novice interactions can be informal, such as when children and parents or siblings interact (Rogoff, 1990).

However, Vygotsky's conception of the ZPD is much broader than the expert-novice interaction; he extended it to all socially shared activities. Also, not all of the assistance used by the child needs to be intentionally provided by an adult. Vygotsky believed that the child can start performing on a higher level of the ZPD through any type of social interaction—interaction with peers as equals, with imaginary partners, or with children at other developmental levels. For example, three year-old Benny cannot sit still during a story. The teacher tries to provide different types of assistance to help him focus. She calls out his name, places her hand on his shoulder, and signals to him nonverbally. In spite of these efforts, Benny continues to wiggle and look around the room. Later that day, Benny is playing school with a group of friends. Tony sits in a chair and "reads" a book just like the teacher, while Benny and several other children "pretend" to be students and listen. Benny sits and listens, focusing his attention for four to five minutes. Benny is practicing the same behavior that the teacher had desired—focused attention. The ability to concentrate for a short time is within his ZPD, but we can see that he requires a particular type of assistance—that of play and peers. With the assistance of his peers, Benny is able to perform at the higher levels of his ZPD, but with the teacher he is not able to do so.

How we assess children. The idea of the ZPD has direct implications for assessing what children know and can do. Instead of limiting assessment only to what children can do independently, we should include what they can do with different levels of assistance. Teachers should note how children use their help as well as what hints

are the most useful. This technique, often called "dynamic assessment," has great potential for improving and expanding authentic classroom assessment (Cronbach, 1990; McAfee & Leong, 1994).

By using the ZPD in assessment, not only do we have a more accurate estimate of the child's abilities, but we have a more flexible way of assessing children. Teachers can rephrase a question, pose it differently, or encourage the child to show what she knows. Using the ZPD, we get at the child's best performance or understanding.

What is developmentally appropriate. The idea of the Zone of Proximal Development broadens the term developmentally appropriate. The term developmentally appropriate is defined by the child's independent achievements—by the processes and skills that have fully developed (Bredekamp, 1992). It does not currently include the level of assisted performance and emerging processes and skills. Thus, teachers are likely to wait until desired behavior emerges spontaneously before providing activities that encourage it. As a result, children only have learning opportunities at what Vygotsky considers the lower level of their ZPD.

The concept of the ZPD expands the idea of what is developmentally appropriate to include the things the child can learn with assistance. Vygotsky argues that the most effective teaching is aimed at the higher level of the child's ZPD. Teachers should provide activities just beyond what the child can do on her own, but within what the child can do with assistance. Thus, the learning/teaching dialogue proceeds slightly ahead of the child's status at any given time. If adults, for example, only provided language stimulation geared to the child's actual speech and not at a level slightly higher, then they would only use baby talk with toddlers and never speak in full sentences. But in actual practice, adults, both parents and teachers, intuitively add more information and use more complex grammar than the toddler is currently capable of producing. As a result, the child learns more complex grammar and expands her vocabulary.

Another example of how we intuitively use the level of assisted performance is seen when we deal with the conflicts that naturally arise between young children. When two-and-a-half year-olds are fighting, the teacher describes each child's feelings even though the children may not yet be able to take another person's perspective. Few teachers would want to wait to talk with the children until these perspective-taking skills emerge naturally, when they are four and five years of age.

With the ZPD, Vygotsky emphasized that the child should practice what he can do independently and, at the same time, be exposed to things at higher levels of the ZPD. Both levels are developmentally appropriate. Teachers must be sensitive to the child's reaction to the support and assistance provided in the ZPD. If the child accepts the teacher's support, then the teacher has hit within the ZPD. If a child ignores help, and still cannot perform at the higher level of the ZPD as expected, then the teacher needs to rethink the support. Perhaps the skill is outside this child's zone, or the assistance provided is not useful and should be modified. The ZPD helps teachers look at what support to provide, and how the child reacts, in a more sensitive way.

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IT'S ELEMENTARY!

The California Department of Education has published the report of its Elementary Grades Task Force. Entitled ***It's Elementary!***, the document is intended to help administrators, community leaders, parents, and teachers achieve excellence in public schools during the most critical years of a child's educational development. It sets forward 32 recommendations which summarize much of the research and practice at the elementary level. These recommendations are designed to assist school teams of teachers, parents, and administrators in engaging children in a "thinking curriculum, one which immerses students in a rich learning environment that recognizes and celebrates the unique backgrounds and experiences each student brings to the classroom."

The recommendations for realizing California's vision for educational renaissance are:

(1) Make a rich, meaning-centered, thinking curriculum the centerpiece of instruction for all students in all subject areas in the elementary grades.
(2) Begin curricular reform by mastering a single subject area.
(3) Reduce the amount of time spent on skill-based activities.
(4) Choose depth over coverage in teaching a subject.
(5) Schedule class work in longer blocks of time.
(6) Team teach and specialize, especially in the upper elementary grades.
(7) Extend the learning day with homework assignments consistent with the thinking curriculum.
(8) Use a variety of grouping strategies.
(9) Provide more collaborative learning opportunities.
(10) Intervene early to prevent learning problems, especially in reading fluency.
(11) Develop an academic support network to ensure that all students acquire important learnings the first time around.
(12) Use categorical resources to support the thinking curriculum.
(13) Ensure that limited-English-proficient (LEP) students have access to the thinking curriculum.

IT'S ELEMENTARY!

Continued from page 3

(14) Avoid grade-level retention as an instructional strategy.
(15) Invest shrewdly in technology to help promote the thinking curriculum.
(16) Provide teachers access to the best thinking about curriculum and instructional practices.
(17) Make sure that teachers have adequate scheduled time for working together in professional collaborations at the school site.
(18) Support teacher professionalism with a classroom supply budget, secretarial help, and a well-equipped workplace.
(19) Aggressively recruit teachers from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds.
(20) Support new teachers.
(21) Continue building a system of authentic, performance-based assessments that measure the full scope of the thinking curriculum.
(22) Define a set of performance standards for the elementary years.
(23) Assess limited-English-proficient (LEP) students' performance in the home language.
(24) **Do not assign letter grades during the primary years.**
(25) Develop a unifying vision of what the school is trying to accomplish.
(26) Use the vision of the school as a guide for action.
(27) Bond students to their schools by making them feel part of a caring community.
(28) Reach out to parents to solicit their active involvement in the education of their children.
(29) Systematically upgrade school plants statewide.
(30) Coordinate human services at the school site to ensure that the basic security needs of children are being met.
(31) Enable the local school community to take the problem-solving initiative.
(32) Hold schools accountable for reaching agreed-on outcomes.

It's Elementary! also addresses the issue of a teacher's sense of professionalism and cites reasons that this part of her/his self-concept may be undermined:

- **isolation** - Whereas 80 percent of teachers respond favorably to the concept of visiting, or being observed by, their peers as a means of increased professional development, only 20 percent indicate that they have the opportunity of doing so.
- **class size** - Having an average of 28.3 students in each elementary class, the public school system in California ranks 49th out of the 50 states in terms of class size.
- **lack of instructional materials** - The shortage of maps and globes, paper (at the end of the year), textbooks, and video equipment is widespread. Teachers are spending their own money to purchase materials.
- **no career ladder** - The lack of opportunities for advancement within the teaching profession means that in order to continue earning salary increases, many teachers leave education and move into administration.
- **lack of autonomy** - In many instances teachers are treated as "technicians or assembly-line workers.... Decisions that directly affect what takes place in the classroom—which topics will be taught, which textbooks will be used, how classes will be scheduled, and how a teacher's performance will be measured—are made elsewhere."

To address these issues which negatively affect a teacher's sense of professional worth, and to provide for ongoing professional growth opportunities, the report provides an outline of a career ladder. Rungs on such a ladder might include:

- a teaching residency;
- the earning of tenure;
- earning of "board certified" status in one's speciality from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards;
- assuming responsibility in curriculum development, school governance, staff development, or peer evaluation;
- taking a sabbatical year of work-study in a field related to one's academic interest; and
- being recognized as a "lead" teacher or mentor.

Copies of ***It's Elementary!*** are available for $5 each, plus sales tax for California residents, from the Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Department of Education, P. O. Box 271, Sacramento, California 95812-0271, (916) 445-1260.

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